

Living well to play well

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The wellbeing of professional and semi-professional athletes is more in focus today than ever. As professionals they are subject to many of the same rules and responsibilities that govern all workplaces, whilst at the same time, have a time limited career, and are subject to intense public scrutiny. As with people in other workplaces, stress experienced by athletes can cause social, relational, psychological and physical problems and can impact on their ability to perform (in their workplace), in their family and social lives, and can limit their success. Furthermore, stress is a risk factor for the development of mental health concerns such as depression, and the use of alcohol as a tension reduction strategy. Many health models of care emphasise self management of health and related factors but little is known about the applicability of health and wellbeing models for use with elite athletes. The PlayWell project investigates the applicability of a manualised small group based program for use with first year players at all AFL clubs in Australia. Pre and post data has been gathered examining emotional intelligence, resilience, affect and locus of control, to determine the effect of the program on the athletes. This presentation presents a brief literature overview of work to date in this exciting new area, and preliminary data gathered over two time points on four validated scales (as mentioned) and demographic profiles of the cohort.

Attending to health risk information: Is denial always maladaptive?

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It has been widely reported that individuals high in optimism tend to have better health outcomes than individuals who are less optimistic. One explanation for this finding is that optimism is adaptive in confronting threats to health as such an outlook facilitates the processing of information about risks to well being. This processing allows effective planning of behavioural responses which in turn decreases the risk and alleviates anxiety. However, Pedruzzi & Swinbourne have reported opposite effects, whereby optimism is associated with greater levels of denial or disengagement with risk information. One explanation for this contradiction is that in past health research the risk information presented tends to be concerned with modifiable risk factors. Thus optimists may attend to such information as it is useful for planning coping behaviours and eventually alleviating anxiety. The risk information in Pedruzzi & Swinbourne described factors that were largely out of the participants' control. Thus the best anxiety reduction strategy would be to ignore the information as there is no appropriate course of action that would modify the risk. It may well be that optimists are more flexible in their selection of coping strategies than individuals lower on optimism and therefore are more likely to switch strategy depending upon the nature of the risk. The aim of the current study is to further explore this inconsistency in findings. It is hypothesised that participants high on optimism will have greatest attention and recall of risk information only when the health risk is potentially controllable. This effect will be void when the health risk is not controllable. Specifically, optimists will be more likely to employ a strategy such as denial when they perceive the outcome of the situation cannot be controlled than when the risk is perceived as controllable. The results will be discussed in light of current theories of best practice population health promotion and intervention.

Guidelines on the management of cannabis use disorder

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This workshop will introduce participants to the recently developed guidelines for the management of cannabis use disorder and related issues. These aim to provide clinicians with a reference point for the identification and management of cannabis related problems. Healthcare practitioners may be confronted with a range of presentations of cannabis use disorder including some complex clinical profiles which include mental health symptoms and acute behavioural disturbances such as psychosis and aggression as well as physical symptoms such as respiratory problems. This workshop is suitable for healthcare practitioners who work in a variety of settings where clients present with cannabis use disorders. Participants will be made familiar with the various aspects of the guidelines including screening, assessment, withdrawal, psycho-education and interventions and will receive a free copy of the guidelines.